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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

Eternal Father, strong to save, whose arms have bound the restless waves, let Your still small voice echo down time's corridors to renew our lawmakers and to lift their vision. Inspire them to dedicate themselves to eternal values and to be unafraid of the consequences of following the highest standards they know. May they run from the success purchased at the cost of cowardice and cunning. Guide them, Lord, by Your living word, as You infuse them with the spirit of service. Help them to see that nothing they do can separate them from Your love but that they can block the experience of Your joy. Remind them to make Your joy their strength.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business for up to an hour, with Senators being allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The Republicans will control the first half, the Democrats the second half.

Following morning business, the Senate will begin 10 hours of statutory debate with respect to the conference report to accompany the resolution on the budget. Under an agreement we reached last night, the Senate will proceed to the conference report upon receiving a message from the House of Representatives with respect to the conference report. Senators will be notified when the vote on adoption of the conference report is scheduled. We will probably vote on that late this afternoon, early this evening. We have 10 hours. There are no amendments in order. There are no procedural obstacles to our finishing that fairly quickly. I spoke to Chairman CONRAD. He certainly will not use the 5 hours which we are allotted, so we will yield back a lot of that time. Even if the Republicans use all of their 5 hours, we should be able to vote fairly quickly.

As far as the rest of the week is concerned, we hope to reach an agreement with the Republicans to begin consideration of the housing legislation, which

we should be able to start either tonight or tomorrow.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask that the time be equally charged.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FLU OUTBREAKS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we were all saddened this morning to hear

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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that a Texas child has died from the recent outbreak of the H1N1 flu. This is a very worrisome situation, and we are all following it very closely.

Yesterday, Secretary Napolitano briefed Republicans on this matter, and we appreciate the administration's coordination with Congress. The administration has said that it currently has all the personnel and equipment it needs to handle the situation, but going forward, Congress is prepared to work on the request for additional funds in the supplemental.

I would note that Congress is in a much better position to deal with outbreaks such as this as a result of the hard work of Senator BURR and others, who have done a great deal on the issue of biopreparedness and on coordinating all of the relevant Government agencies. We stand ready to closely work with the administration to protect the American people as this situation unfolds.

BUDGET CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, from the very first days of the new administration, Senate Republicans have pledged to work closely with our new President and his Cabinet to find solutions to the Nation's many foreign and domestic challenges.

On the foreign policy front, we felt strongly about the need to work with the new administration on a unified agenda that protects the American people and furthers our interests abroad. So far, we have had two major points of convergence.

On the enormously important question of our strategies in both Afghanistan and Iraq, Republicans support the President's decision to follow, in both cases, the best advice of his military commanders on the ground.

We may part ways on a number of other foreign policy issues, some of which I outlined in greater detail earlier this week, but when it comes to the question of Iraq and Afghanistan, the President's strategy is one that most everyone can support.

Here at home, there have admittedly been fewer opportunities for agreement.

An ongoing recession and the continuing reverberations of a financial shock that began in the housing industry led both parties to come up with their own respective plans to jumpstart the economy in the short term and strengthen its foundations in the long term.

The administration's plan revolved around a trillion dollar stimulus that was neither timely, targeted, nor temporary—as well as a decision to press forward on several major, controversial legislative proposals. If the President's budget is fully implemented, it would double the national debt in just 5 years and nearly triple it in 10.

Republicans had a different approach. We worked closely with Democrats last fall to pass a financial rescue plan

aimed at stabilizing the overall economy. But we refused to support a second round of funds when the administration couldn't assure us it would only be used to address the crisis at hand.

When it came to an economic stimulus, Republicans pointed out the glaring weaknesses in the Democrat plan and we offered a plan of our own that would have cost half as much and gone straight to the root of the problem, which is housing.

We also suggested that instead of spending billions on wasteful projects, we loan State and local governments money. This would have encouraged the careful use of taxpayer dollars since State and local governments would have known they would have to pay the money back when the economy improved.

We also refused to support bailouts for the auto industry, since we don't think the Government should be picking winners and losers. We said bailouts would only delay necessary reforms for long-term success. Our position was recently vindicated when the automakers came back for even more money, forcing the administration to talk seriously about bankruptcy as a means of achieving the necessary restructuring.

When it comes to protecting taxpayers and to a mounting debt that our children will inherit, the new administration has been remarkably carefree. Most of this debt is being financed by China and countries in the Middle East, which of course increases the economic leverage these countries have over the United States.

Americans are worried about this and they should be. In a time of economic hardship, we should not be borrowing money we will not be able to pay back.

The current administration seems to disagree. In just 1 week in February, the administration's acts cost the American taxpayers more than \$1 trillion, or more than the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina combined.

Federal support for a single company in the financial sector now amounts to almost \$175 billion over the past year alone. That is more than what we will spend this year on the deployment costs of our Armed Forces fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

So far this year the most far-reaching legislation we have considered is the budget. In the middle of a recession, the same Democrats who were outraged over a \$455 billion deficit last year came to us this year with a budget that would lead to trillion-dollar deficits and which saddles Americans with more debt than all the debt we had accumulated from George Washington to the present day, combined.

Hundreds of thousands of American workers are losing their jobs every month. They are concerned that all this spending and debt will not just slow the economic recovery but make it harder to keep or find jobs. These

Americans may like the President, but they do not understand how a giant expansion of Government will help create or preserve jobs.

They do not think the administration has done enough to explain how borrowing money to create those programs will make America stronger, more secure, and more economically sound.

Americans are also increasingly concerned about the administration's approach to a number of foreign policy issues that are related to our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. One of the most troubling of these decisions relates to the terrorist detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Shortly after taking office, the new Attorney General was tasked with closing Guantanamo by next January.

Yet 3 months later, the administration still has not provided the American people with any further details about what will happen to these inmates once the January deadline arrives. The American people do not want terrorists back on the battlefield, and they certainly do not want them released into their neighborhoods, as some in the administration have shockingly proposed, according to news accounts.

The administration has not been clear about its reason for closing Guantanamo before it has a plan for these detainees. But its reason cannot be that the facility is poorly run, since Attorney General Holder has said himself that the facilities there are good ones. It cannot be that the administration has a better alternative. If it did, we would have heard about it by now. The American people do not want trained terrorists released into their neighborhoods. They want answers. Unfortunately, the administration has only offered silence.

In the face of tremendous challenges at home and abroad, the new administration offered a burst of activity and a veritable explosion of debt. Meanwhile, Republicans have proposed responsible solutions that are meant to empower the American people and improve the quality of their daily lives.

On this front, Republicans will continue to offer sensible ideas on health care that address the concerns Americans have about the high cost of doctors visits, about finding good health coverage, and about keeping the coverage they have.

The lesson of the failed health care proposal of the Clinton era is not that Americans do not want reform, it is that any reform should reflect the needs of all Americans, not just a select few in Washington. Americans do not want a health care solution that puts bureaucrats in charge of medical decisions, delays appointments or diminishes the quality of health care they already receive.

Health care is an area where Americans expect the President and Congress to work together. The divide-and-conquer approach did not work in 1993, it will not work in 2009.